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ABSTRACT

The third in a series on parenting education for American Indians, the booklet outlines a child's stages of development from birth to 5 years old. Topics include the new baby; child development from 6 to 10 weeks, 2 to 5 months, and 6 to 11 months; characteristics of babies from birth to 30 months; parent's role in developing a healthy self-image, sense of responsibility and helpfulness, and being resourceful; helping the child develop decision-making skills and problem-solving skills; and rewarding your child and yourself. (ERB)

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Child Development Stages

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Introduction

To be a good parent, it is important to know how children grow. This means more than knowing how to feed them or bathe them or knowing when to expect certain things to happen—like crawling or sitting up. It means knowing the importance of your attitudes, expectations, and actions in helping your child develop fully.

Many parents don't know what to expect from a child, whether a child's actions or appearance is normal or not. They may get upset at something that is perfectly normal for a child to do, or they may worry too much about some things that are really quite common.

This booklet will help you to understand better the normal stages in your child's development. In this way it will help you avoid needless worry, help keep you from under or overreacting, and assist you in guiding your child through a happy and healthy period of growth.

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The New Baby

Brand new babies cry as soon as they are born. This helps start their breathing process. Be careful not to interpret this crying as something bad. It is your baby's way of growing strong lungs. As the baby get older in its infancy, it is also a way to tell you he or she is hungry, wet, unhappy or not feeling well. If crying never seems to stop, consult a doctor. Babies cannot be told to stop crying. Sometimes a diaper change or a bottle is all that is needed. Sometimes some affection or attention is required. If the cries are about to drive you crazy, get someone to help you with the baby for a few minutes or a few hours. This will relieve your own tension, and may help keep you from hurting your baby.

Too much attention or excessive holding of the baby can become habitual for the baby and cause it to expect this constant attention. That is when a baby can become "spoiled" for that attention and cry excessively when left alone. It may then be necessary for a parent to ignore a crying baby if such is the case.

Most babies lose weight shortly after birth and regain it by the 10th day. Sometimes a baby's nose looks odd right after birth, but in time it will gain its normal shape. New sounds may scare a baby, and bright lights make babies frown, scowl or cry. Their eyes and ears need time to get used to the sounds and sights of their new world. In time they will. Just be patient. Sometimes a fitful waking, sneezing or choking may occur. These will disappear as the baby's nervous system develops further.

A new baby cannot control muscles yet. You need to support the baby's head at all times until the baby can do it alone. In time the baby will be able to grab hold of your finger. By the end of the first month the baby will begin to make small noises, but most of the time crying is his or her only language.

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Six to Ten Weeks

Now your baby can stare at things and make lots of little noises. He or she begins now to reach for objects, like the bottle. Sleeping still takes up most of his or her time, but you can probably start sleeping through the night without being awakened by a hungry baby by the end of ten weeks. Remember that all babies differ a little bit. If you think babies should be active, you may be disappointed or worried at a quiet one. If you think all babies should lay quietly most of the time, you may get upset at a very baby. Don't blame yourself or the baby. Just enjoy each other. Some babies seem moody and unhappy most of the time. Don't feel it's your fault. Learn to ignore some of the crying. But if it gets to be too much for you, don't be ashamed to ask for help. Lots of people are glad to take care of babies for even a little while.

If your baby has a combination of moodiness, slow adaptability, fears, nerves, upset stomach and is whiney all the time, you will need a great deal of patience. Try to find more time for yourself, or enlist more help from other extended family or community members and friends. This will keep you from feeling so much tension, resentment and hostility and is good for both you *and* your baby.

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Two to Five Months

Now your baby may begin to take some weight on his or her legs when held, or begin to roll over. Toward five months the baby will be able to sit up without support, and to stand holding on. You can find more variety in foods by the fifth month. Even though formula and/or milk is all that is necessary for the baby's health up to five months, you may want to begin introducing new foods.

It is not necessary to buy expensive baby foods. You can use a fork or a strainer to strain fruits and vegtables your family is eating. Just be careful not to feed the baby anything he or she can choke on (like peanuts, celery strings, etc.). It is a good idea to introduce one new food at a time. You might want to start with applesauce. Give the baby 2-3 spoonfuls of applesauce each day for a week. If the baby has no bad reaction to the applesauce, you know it is safe. The next week you can introduce something else—like frybread, mashed potatoes or cooked carrots. Give the baby time to get used to each new food before you add another. This way you can find out if your baby is going to be allergic to any food.

Six to Eleven Months

Your baby will begin to sit up alone now, and may begin to stand alone by 10-11 months. He or she can walk holding on to furniture, begin to say words directly to you, try to copy other speech sounds you make.

The following table is a good summary of some of the things you can expect of your child during the first two years.

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Characteristics	Most babies First do this between
Holds head off bed for a few seconds while laying on stomach Looks at your face Pays attention to sounds Makes vocal sounds other than crying	Birth and 4 weeks
Follows an object with his eyes for a short distance	Birth and 6 weeks
Smiles when you smile or play with them	Birth & 2 months
Urinates about every hour	Birth & 3 months
Healthy symbiosis	Birth & 6 months
Holds head upright laying on stomach	5 weeks & 3 months
Brings hands together in front, laughs	6 weeks & 3½ months
Holds head steady when held in sitting position	6 weeks & 4 months
Squeals	6 weeks & 4½months
Smiles on his/her own	6 weeks & 5 months
Follows with eyes from one side all the way to the other side of head	2 months & 4 months
Rolls over from front to back, or back to front	2 months & 5 months
Begins urinating about every 2-3 hours	2 months & 12 months
Grasps a rattle placed in fingers	2½ months & 4½ months
Ready to come out of crib, crawl, explore more	3 months & 4 months
Takes part of weight on own legs when held steady	3 months & 8 months
First teeth appear	3 months & 12 months
Turns toward your voice	4 months & 8 months
Pulls back when you pull a toy in in his/her hand	4 months & 10 months
Passes a toy from one hand to the other	5 months & 7½ months
Begins to be able to sip from a cup Feeds himself/herself crackers Sits without support when placed in sitting position Grasps small object (like a raisin) off table	5 months & 8 months

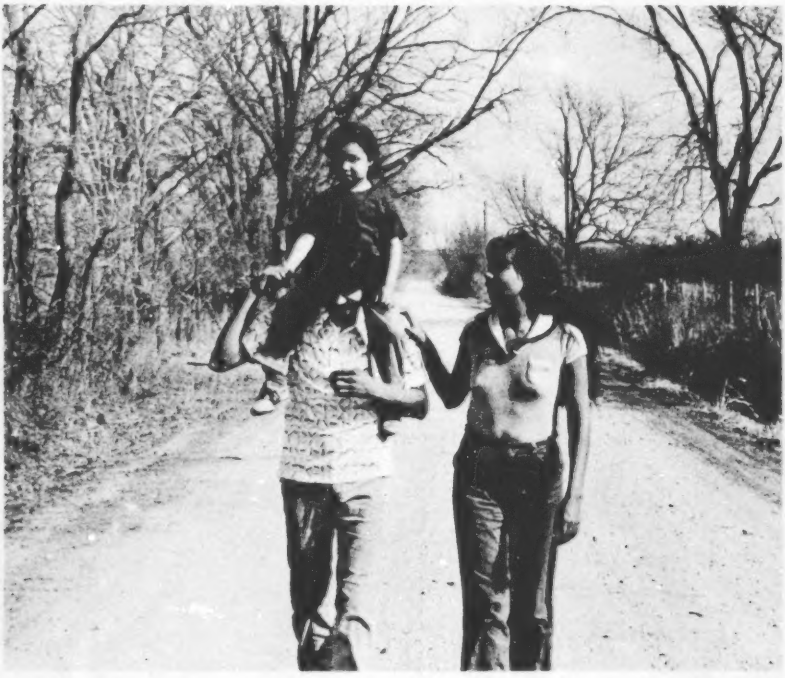
Tries to get a toy that is out of reach	5 months & 9 months
Stands holding on	5 months & 10 months
Ready for strained foods, cereals	5 months & 12 months
Plays peek-a-boo Says words for Daddy or Mama	6 months & 10 months
Gets self into sitting position Imitates the speech sounds you make	6 months & 11 months
Picks up small object using thumb and finger	7months & 10 months
Brings together two toys held in hands	7 months & 12 months
Plays patty-cake	7 months & 13 months
Walks holding onto furniture	7½ months & 13 months
Stands for a moment alone	9 months & 13 months
Uses word to mean one specific person	10 months & 14 months
Plays with a ball on the floor	10 months & 15 months
Drinks from a cup by self	10 months & 16 months
Walks alone across room	11 months & 15 months
Scribbles with a pencil or crayon	12months & 24 months
Shows signs of being ready to toilet train	18 months & 30 months

Note: *Remember that a baby born earlier than expected ("premature") will normally be later in development.*

Knowing what to expect from your child next helps you to protect him or her. If you know when your child will begin to crawl, for example, you can start to put things away that are close to the floor.

It is very important to remember at all times that your child always needs your love, attention, and guidance all the way to adulthood. As the child grows, the need will change but in many Indian communities, it never stops. As the child grows older, you will find that your role becomes more like a teacher's.

Many parents feel that a child begins to learn only when it is time to go to school. This is not true. You, the parent, are the first and most important teacher your child will ever have. Even when a child starts school, the home is still the most important classroom. Most specialists who study child development agree that the first five years are the most important formative ones in a child's life. During these years, your child is learning about the world outside themselves, as well as the feelings inside themselves. Your child's ability to learn many skills in these early years will depend on the encouragement and opportunities you give him or her.



Raising of children is basically a human relationship between parents and children. There are no rigid rules; there are lots of possible parenting styles. But there are *some* guidelines to help parents develop happy, self-confident, and self-disciplined children. Following are some areas that all parents need to know more about:

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Developing a Healthy Self-image

One of the most important things a parent can do is to help a child develop a healthy self-image. This means that the child likes himself or herself, and feels he or she is a worthwhile person. A child with a positive sense of self, family and people delights in knowing there is no one else in the world exactly like them. Such a child learns to set realistic goals which can be easily achieved, believes that he or she can handle problems encountered, and goes into life with a sense of strength and joy. Children without positive self-image, may endure psychological or emotional imbalances, which may manifest through acts of aggression or hostility, or even serious withdrawal.

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Developing a Sense of Responsibility and Helpfulness

When children are three to five years of age, they often delight in proving how grown up they are. Now you can begin to give them some small responsibilities in the home to let them feel helpful and needed. When their early attempts to be helpful have been appreciated, children are usually ready to start doing simple, regular tasks in the home. If you encourage this kind of activity, and reward it with praise and attention, the child will grow up with a better attitude toward helping others. The beginning of helpfulness and responsibility in children can be crushed by not allowing them to do little jobs they are able to do. Here are some guidelines for how you can help develop a sense of responsibility and helpfulness in your child:

—Arrange for your child to be successful in the early stages of the task that is being learned.

—Start with simple tasks and work up to more difficult ones as your child's skills increase.

—Design or change the activity according to your child's level of ability.

—Suit the task to your child's individual interest.

—Be cheerful, supportive and understanding when your child's interest diminishes. Show your willingness to help. The child who is given help when needed learns how to give help to others, and avoids feeling like a failure.

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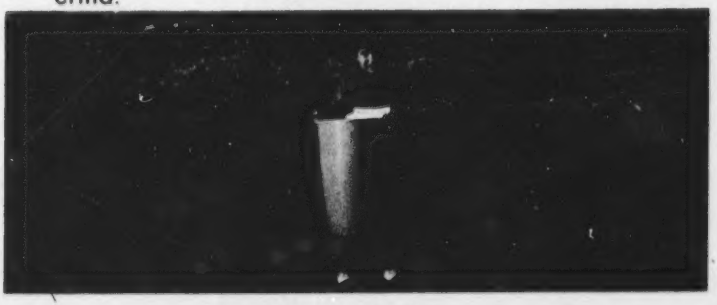
Developing Resourcefulness

This is much like helping to develop responsibility and helpfulness. A resourceful child is one who learns over the years to stand alone, to be self-sufficient, and to be able to cope with the world as it is. Here are some ways we can help our children be resourceful:

1. Don't underestimate your child's ability. Encourage your child to keep trying things over and over, but don't put *too* much pressure on your child to do something beyond their ability.
2. Children grow in resourcefulness when given the chance to see the world around them. Provide lots of different experiences for your child, like riding in a car, riding on a horse, bus, tractor, or elevator. Take them on special trips to nearby stores, the library, the post office, a firehouse. Allow them to learn as much about as many things as possible, just by observation. This can be fun for the whole family to do together.
3. Encourage your child to ask questions. Try not to be impatient when they come all the time and seem to be foolish. The child who asks questions has a valuable tool for developing self-confidence and ability.
4. Let your child speak for himself or herself. As much as possible, let your child answer questions asked by a dentist, a doctor, a storekeeper, a teacher, or a neighbor or friend. This also lets your child learn to speak better, to express feelings and fears. And it helps your child feel important, capable and worthwhile.
5. Allow your child to run any possible errand. Let your child carry messages to a next-door neighbor, mail a letter, or get the newspaper. This is helpful to both you and your child.



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Developing Decision-making Skills

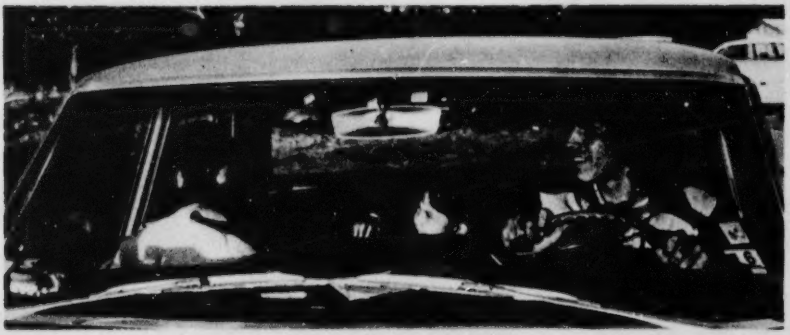
An important part of growing up is learning how to make decisions. When you let your child do this, he or she learns about alternatives. When possible, let yourchild plan some of his or her own or the family's activities. Keep the choices simple: "Do you want me to read this book, or that one?" "Do you want to sit in the back of the bus or near the door?" "Would you like cake or jello?"

Developing Problem Solving Skills

When a child is faced with a problem, they may not be able to deal with it and may need your help. If you want your child to develop problem-solving skills, take time to talk about problems as they occur. This is not always easy to do, because problems have a way of creeping up at crisis times, or unexpectedly. Make the effort as much as possible to discuss such problems with your child. Here is one approach:

1. Identify the problem and what caused it. Talk about it.
2. Choose a sclution. Talk over several solutions.

This will help a child learn the laws of cause and effect. Once a child understands this, the foundation is built for anticipating what can happen in certain situations, and recognizing what has already happened to others. The ability to deal with problems by describing them and solving them does not come easily for children, nor for many adults! It takes patience on the part of everyone, but the benefits are many. If everyone can keep a good sense of humor about things, it helps. The most important thing is to be able to discuss things without anger or tension.



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Rewarding Your Child

It is important for everyone to have faith in themselves. One of the best ways to develop this in our children is by a system of rewards. The most meaningful reward for a child is love, interest and attention. Listening to the child hugging him or her, smiling and praising, talking and reading are all important ways we reward our children. Children need lots of approval and praise when they are little. As they grow older, they will most likely develop self-confidence and need less approval from others. Some forms of rewards for older children are special trips, gifts, allowances and other privileges.

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Rewarding Yourself

Be sure to reward yourself too. Parents need praise and appreciation as well. Parenting is the most difficult job you will ever have, and you will never get any overtime pay, vacation time, bonuses or raises for being a good parent. The best reward we can get is to have a happy and healthy child.

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